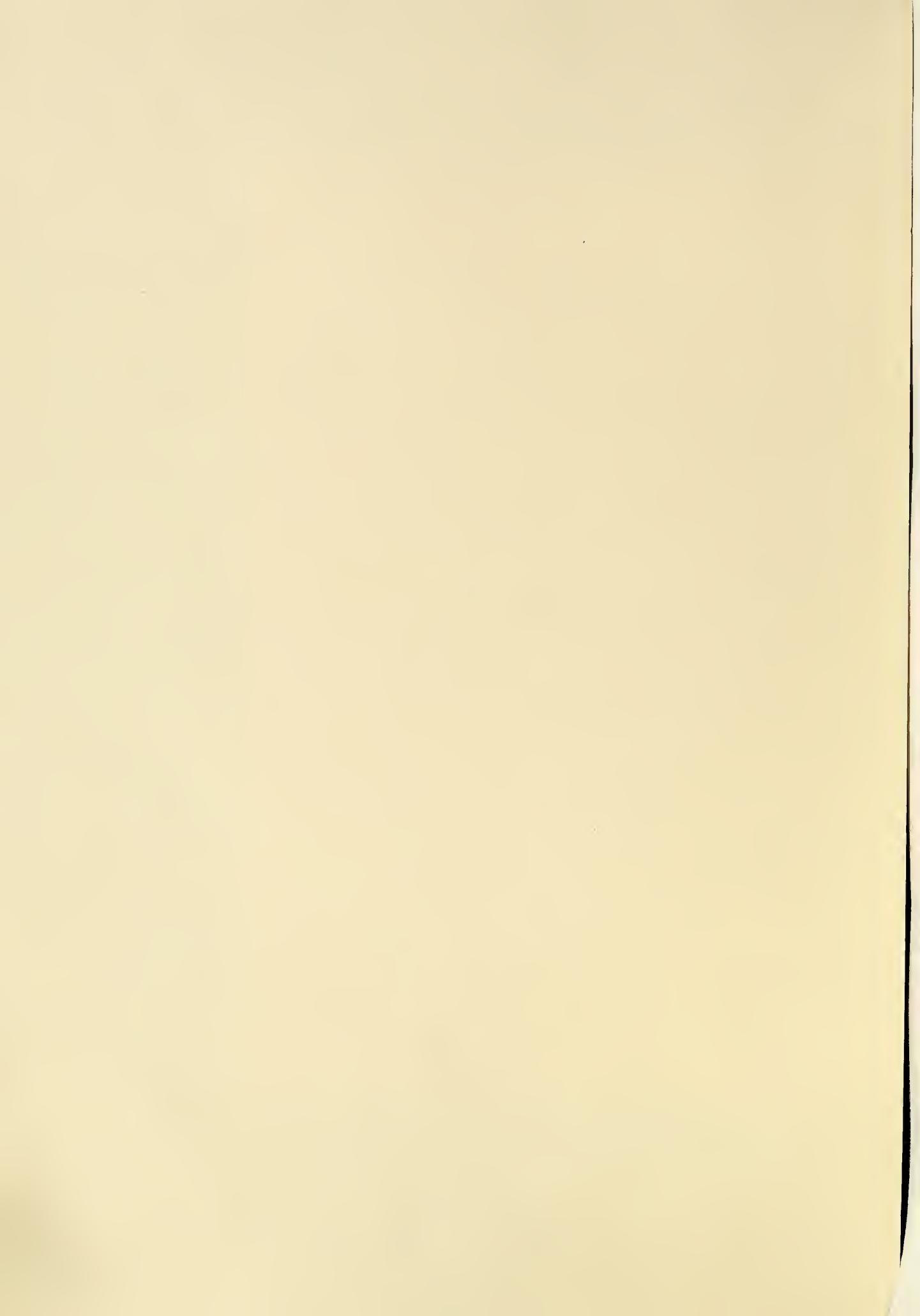


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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 447-4330

Letter No. 2499

March 16, 1991



MADIGAN SWEARING-IN -- Speaker of the House **Thomas S. Foley** (D-Wash.) (right) administers the oath of office to Secretary of Agriculture **Edward Madigan** (left) as President **George Bush** watches and Mrs. **Evelyn Madigan** holds the Madigan family bible. USDA Radio & USDA TV covered the event live. "I am honored to join the Cabinet of the most popular president in American History," Madigan said. "I will do everything I can to support you, as well as every one of the farmers and ranchers across America." (USDA Photo by Bob Nichols.)

REGULAR AEROBIC TRAINING can improve the fitness of inactive people in their 60's, just as much as "couch potatoes" in their 20's. But the improvements occur differently in each age group, a USDA study shows. The findings corroborate other reports that endurance exercise improves older people's fitness but doesn't significantly improve the maximum amount of blood the heart can pump. Contact: William J. Evans (617) 556-3075.

TENNIS BALL-SIZED HEADS OF LETTUCE -- just right for singles -- should be on the market in a few years, USDA scientists say. Miniature iceberg lettuce may appear in trendy restaurants & supermarket produce section by 1993. Only the size of a tennis ball, the midget lettuce is ideal for people who can't seem to use a whole head while it's still fresh. Cut into wedges, it makes a single-serving salad. Contact: Edward J. Ryder (408) 755-2800.

HELP FOR RETURNING TROOPS -- Even though the U.S. has ordered a cease-fire in the Persian Gulf War, USDA hasn't stopped offering programs of education, counseling & "coping assistance" to families of military personnel deployed to the Persian Gulf. And now, these programs are also helping in the "reuniting" stage, as troops begin to come home. "Military families need to realize the three stages they normally encounter in those situations," says Geneva Brown, a family life educator with the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service in Auburn. The three stages are: anticipation for separation; the actual separation; and reuniting. Contact: Adrian Bailey (803) 656-3875.

USDA PRECLEARING TROOPS & EQUIPMENT -- USDA officials are now in the Persian Gulf inspecting military equipment & personal baggage for prohibited ag items. "Our inspectors will brief military units on how to prepare gear and equipment for return to the United States, including tips on how to clean and seal materials for transit," says James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA's Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service. A major risk is from agricultural souvenirs that soldiers might bring from the Gulf region. No-no's include camel saddles. Contact: Doug Hendrix (301) 436-7255.

GETTING THE GARDEN READY -- Getting the right start in the spring is especially important for a productive garden, says Horticulturist Tom Koske of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service. First, he says, choose a good site & prepare it properly for the crops you plan to grow. If you haven't already tested the soil, do so now. Don't lime, unless the soil test calls for it, Koske says. Now is also a good time to add compost, grass clippings or leaves. For other tips, contact: Thomas Koske (504) 388-4141.

CONSERVATION CHANGES -- Keith Bjerke, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization & Conservation Service, says USDA has proposed changes in highly erodible land & wetland conservation program provisions. "Additional programs have been added to the list of those under which benefits could be lost for violation of the rules," Bjerke says. "Certain benefits will also be denied under the dairy assessment refund program, the Agricultural Conservation Program, the Emergency Conservation Programs and the Water Bank Program." Contact: Bruce Merkle (202) 447-8206.

FOOD COSTS -- Retail food prices, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, rose by 5.8 percent in 1990, the same percentage as the year before. This increase also equaled the 1989 price increase, which was the largest since 1981. Price gains for meats & dairy foods were sharp. Food prices in grocery stores climbed 6.5 percent in 1990, but prices for restaurant meals advanced by 4.7 percent. Source: "Food Costs...From Farm to Retail in 1990." Contact: Denis Dunham (202) 219-0870.

USDA TAKES OVER MARYLAND INSPECTION -- Effective March 31, USDA will assume responsibility for the meat & poultry inspection in Maryland. Contact: Jim Greene (202) 382-0314.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1762 -- Maria Bynum travels to California to take an in-depth look at the economic impact of the five-year drought. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1243 -- The bacteria caper; housing the birds; farming in America; gypsy moth eradication; tips on choosing the right nursing home. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1752 -- USDA News Highlights; Madigan sworn in as 24th secretary of agriculture; corn & barley deficiency payments; broiler outlook; the costs of cotton. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1411 -- Diet & mood; adding a touch of oats; improved cotton lines; foiling phytic acid; minerals & developing countries. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Mon., March 25, ag trade update, world livestock situation; Tues., March 26, weekly weather & crop update; Wed., March 27, aquaculture outlook, world cocoa situation; Thurs., March 28, grain stocks, prospective plantings, hog & pig numbers, world tobacco situation; Fri., March 29, ag prices, wool production. (These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories each day which aren't listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling!)

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINES (202) 488-8358 or 8359.
Material changed at 5 p.m., EST, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE
(Week of March 14, 16 & 18, 1991)

FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on National Agriculture Day & Dave Luciani reports on help for gardeners who don't have a green thumb.

ACTUALITIES -- Highlights of swearing-in ceremony of Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan; USDA Chief Meteorologist Norton Strommen on rain in California & dry windy weather in Great Plains; USDA Economist Jerry Bange on corn supply & demand, soybean stocks & cotton exports; ASCS Administrator Keith Bjerke on CRP bid process; USDA Under Secretary John Campbell on dairy assistance.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- Lynn Wyvill reports on FmHA guaranteed loans; DeBoria Janifer reports on the WIC program & Pat O'Leary reports on USDA's Science Day for Kids.

Available on Satellite Westar IV, Transponder 12D (Channel 23), audio 6.2 or 6.8:

THURSDAY 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EST
SATURDAY 10 - 10:45 a.m., EST
MONDAY 8 - 8:45 a.m., EST

OFFMIKE

HOT TOPICS...at producer meetings this winter have related to environmental protection. Art Sechrest (WJBC, Bloomington, Ill.) says there has been much interest in sustainable agriculture, conservation farming & no-till. At a recent statewide no-till conference in Peoria, moderated by Art, 1,700 people attended, which reflects heightened participation & interest in the process. Art says there is an increasing demand for farm broadcasters to MC or serve as moderator at winter meetings.

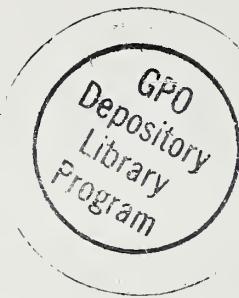
PUTTING PENCIL...to worksheets distributed by Extension Service offices in Ohio & Indiana has convinced many producers to sign up for Farm Bill programs this year. Ron Powers (WOWO, Ft. Wayne, Ind.) says farmers in his area have examined the options & are participating.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE...USDA agricultural broadcast programming is being added to the schedule of KKUB, Brownfield, Texas, longtime user of our Hispanic Information Service.

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U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250-1300

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CHERRY TREES...are in bloom in North Carolina & trees are in leaf, says Johnnie Hood (WPTF/Southern Farm Network, Raleigh, NC), a result of unusually warm weather. Johnnie says winter never really arrived this year. Producers worry that a heavy frost will substantially reduce fruit production. Many growers are installing sprinkler systems, just in case.

INSECT INFESTATION...has producers concerned in Kansas. Mike Dain (Mid America Ag Network, Wichita, Kan.) says army cutworm has invaded wheat areas in many sections of the state, causing some producers to consider alternative crops where possible.

SEND A CARD...to Max Stewart (WIBV, Box A1, Belleville, Ill. 62222), scheduled for a gall bladder operation March 11, & to Kathy Patton (WIBW/Kansas Ag Net, Box 119 Topeka, Kan. 66601) & son Trent Michael, born Feb. 15.

Vic Powell
VIC POWELL
Chief, Radio & TV Division